CONNETCING THE DOTS[1]

ANARCHISTS, HACKERS, SETTLERS

CAPITALISM ALWAYS RAN ON PROMISES. NOW IT JUST RAN OUT OF THEM.
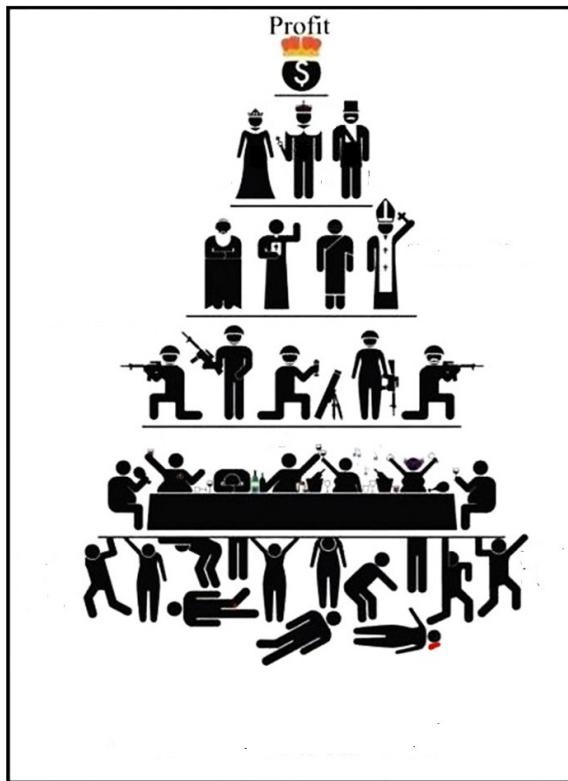
Promises were always the same. Obey and one day you will command. Comply and you will be safe. Serve and we shall take care of you. Buy and you will be happy.

So people stopped paying attention to their own good, to the good of their families or communities. They started doing thing they were rewarded – enormously – for.

And always more wealth was needed to reward those who obeyed – and to build the wealth of their owners. And the wealth always came from outside – new lands, new slaves, new riches.

Then, finally, we ran out of the „outside". The capitalism got global. And that was the beginning of the end.

THE LONG END

The Global North looses privileges and meaning of life. Young people spend 12 yeras earning desired education, to become valued workforce – and there are no jobs for them. Old people retire to become wealthy pensioners – and their benefits get cut every year. Between the young and the old – the rest of society is milling around pontlessly, gambling in a gam,e without real payouts – except for the casino.

The Global South, tired of being called „The Third World", also wants their share of wealth. They even know that there is not enough planet to provide the „First World" living standard – but what the fuck. It's their turn now.

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1   This text is still-under-development version of the talk, initially given in Oslo Hackerspace (hackeriet.no) in June 2014.

The fact is nobody can afford now to fulfill all promises made. Not even half of them. And nobody has any idea how to solve this situation – except from repaying old promises with the new ones.

FANITULLEN[2]

The whole civilisation is so tightly intertwined, that any local turbulence sends quakes globally. Every „local", „minor" crisis suddenly resonates throughout the whole planet, joining the „devils tune", discordian polilogue, tearing the humanity apart. The civilisation became a fragile, overbred, higly specialised creature, with no resilience[3] at all.

RESILIENCE. WANTED. BADLY.

For communities[4], the resilience is not just a matter psycho-power. It's the whole set of resources, needed to keep the community going under pressure, regaining its previous shape when the stress is over, or adapting, if conditions changed forever. It is also the diversity of members – both biological and mental. Uniform community – of any size – is prone to killing factors as much, as the forest monoculture.

Among other element, skills are very important for the community to survive. Social skills, that are directly needed to keep community together, but also technical ones, to make life bearable, of even comfortable.

2   http://youtu.be/0vZbyyF4aaY http://www.espen.com/papers/fanitullen.html
3   „Resilience is that ineffable quality that allows some people to be knocked down by life and come back stronger than ever. Rather than letting failure overcome them and drain their resolve, they find a way to rise from the ashes. (…) Even after a misfortune, blessed with such an outlook, resilient people are able to change course and soldier on." Psychology Today.
4   http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/129392/community-ecology/70600/Community-equilibrium-and-species-diversity

ENTER ANARCHO-POSITIVISM

> *...but I want people to see what we anarchists are doing and say "Yeah, this is better than capitalism!"*[5]

We believe that people need not only to fight against evil, but also to fight for the good they create.

We strive to assist people in their their self-organisation, through education, networking and skills development.

The goal of anarchopositivism is to gather, evaluate, develop and share practical skills needed to build and run resilient communities.

This is the proposal both for anarchists (also aspiring ones) and for those who want to build their own, custom way towards the brilliant future.

ANARCHISM NEEDS ITS OWN „SETTLERS".

- To prove that people can be happy, healthy and fulfilled, living in the free community.
- To give people places for making families, raising kids and growing older.
- To extend political and economical base of the movement.
- To advance anarchist theory and practice.

Anarchism also needs more constructive content. From outside it is mostly perceived as a violent, black-clad, destructive power, running on emotions and hormones.

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5   http://crimethinc.com/tools/downloads/pdfs/anarchy_and_alcohol_reading.pdf

Even anarchists themselves see anarchism as a subculture as well. There is no social space in the movement for a 'burnt-out' anarchist in her/his thirties. There are (almost) no anarchist kindergartens, schools, cooperatives or family cohousings.

The fate of a grown-up anarchist is grim: resocialisation or alienation – and usually both of them.

So we need our own „settlers", to grow full-scale communities, to prove – to ourselves, first – that the anarchism is more than just a toy for the handful of freaks and troublemakers – as it is pictured by the mainstream media.

Apart from the evil we fight with, we need the good to fight for. Apart from the warriors, we need settlers as well.

ANARCHY IS NOT FOR THE WEAKLINGS[6].

> *Structure without hierarchy.*
> *Discipline without obedience.*
> *Solidarity without coercion.*
> *Individual in peace with community.*
> *It is the hard way.*

So, we do not say all people should become anarchists.

But anyway, we can help people to organize in a way that fits them – as long as they value freedom and reject coercion.

Definitely, the solidarity and mutual aid is not just for anarchists. And a bit of anarchy (in therapeutic dose) will only help to build a healthy community of any kind.

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6   Thanks to Qrde! for encouraging me to use this word.

SETTLERS: LIVING IN A CRACK OF THE SYSTEM

After a phase of growth, the global capitalist civilisation is now shrinking. Huge chunks of the physical and social space get abandoned – empty places, closed-down public facilities, cancelled benefits.

Those „wastelands" are perfect places to dwell and to grow new communities. Equipped (thanks to the Internet) with the entire knowledge of the humanity, we are now able to reclaim them – and to make them thrive. Here come the settlers.

A SPECIAL KIND OF PEOPLE

Settlers are really a special group. Be it a Rainbow Family tribe, trying to set up a permanent camp or a squatting community in a city; or some freshly converted (eco)farmers, looking for their better future in the (relative) wilderness. They are all taking personal risks, leaving their comfort zone, trying to change a bit of physical Universe into something more habitable for them and their communities. The hands-on approach, courage and some degree of stubborness are essential for this breed of revolutionaries. They are not particularly aggressive, but really hard to remove from their chosen place. They make anchors, keeping every theory connected with reality.

The ultimate goal of a settler is independence. Food, water, energy, materials – the more locally acquired, the better. It doesn't make settlers autarchic, or uncoperative. They only avoid forced dependence. Thus, they are ready to accept lower living standards in exchange for higher independence.

INDEPENDENCE VS. RESILIENCE

If we grow independent, we have to bear more and more responsibility for our resilience. The less we are conected with the „outside", the less support we may expect. It means our survival chances may become quite slim. Disregarding the level of virtues, vision and determination, if we lack resources, we die.

Among various resources, we shall focus on one category: skills. We may gather them „locally" - learning everything we need or may need in the future. We may also „outsource" some of them. Either through

the skill exchange, or through the solidarity network, we may raesonably expect that certain rare skills (like a dentist, for example) will be available to our community, when needed. If the case is that the only dentist within significant radius is a member of our community, our position in the network improves greatly. :-)

Thus, the resilience vs. independence equation can be solved via a balance between self sustainability and networking. Both aspects need skills of various kinds.

SKILLS, SKILLS, SKILLS.

The best way to keep people subdued is to deprive them of knowledge and competences, replacing them with fake beliefs and specialized training – just enough to obey orders.

Social skills are critical – that is why they are taught in a very limited manner. Just to create „good citizens" - workers, soldiers and consumers.

Technical skills are basically available for specialists, while having „vocational" education do not provide a lot of prestige. That's another way of keeping us away from the critical knowledge.
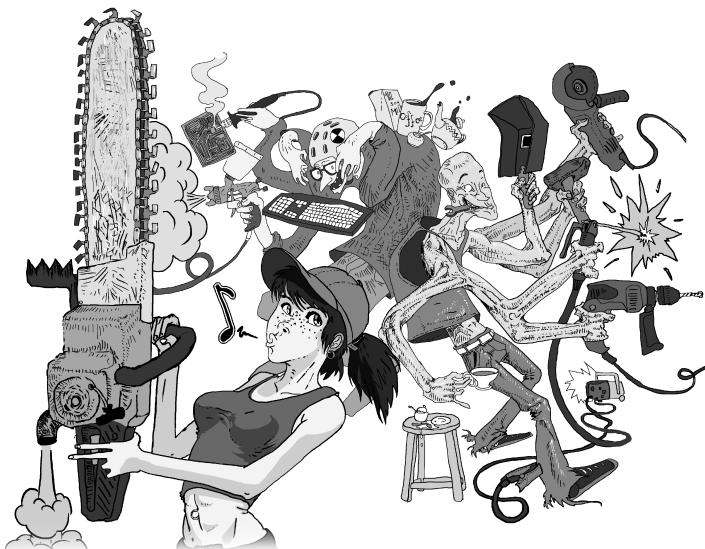
## *Lack of social skills kills*

If we do not obtain required social skills, we shall never built a resilient community.

If we do not combine them with communication skills (technical and otherwise), we shall never be able to network with other communities. So we shall not obtain external support.

Thus, we shall die. Miserably.

Six (more) Ways To Die

This term was coined (as a part of so-called „Simple Critical Infrastructure Map") by Vinay Gupta, prominent engineering specialist in the area of disaster recovery. The diagram shows various reasons that can make our life unbearable – and ultimately kill us. Too hot, too cold, hunger, thirst, injury or illness are basically all ways to day we can identify. On this grid we see also mapped „functionalities" or
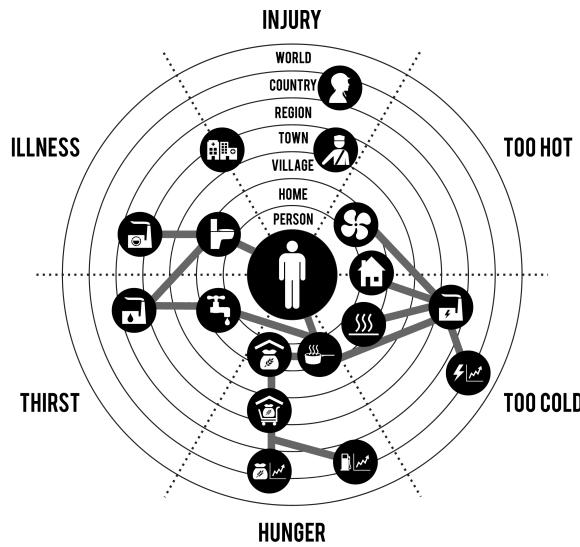
services, that prevent such a grim fate. As we see, it's all about technology (and organisation). This is the briefest way to show, how important technical skills are, if we want the sustainable community to survive. Without them we can't even choose, how to die.

Hackers know how

What is hacking?

Hacking (for those of you who may not know it yet :-)) is in brief disassembling existing systems (technical or not) and putting them back together in a way unexpected (and sometimes undesirable) to their original authors.

Hackers are smart, keen to share their knowledge and generally anarchistic at hearts. They are also hungry for challenges. This is exactly the approach we need, if we want to have our own technology in place.

Hacking is not only paying with gadgets (although it may look this way, sometimes). Genuine hackers are able to hack ideas, social mechanisms, daily life problems – basically anything, being in the category of „a system". Their approach is usually very goal oriented, highly meritocratic and sometimes ;) a bit geeky. And that is why we ~~need~~ love them!
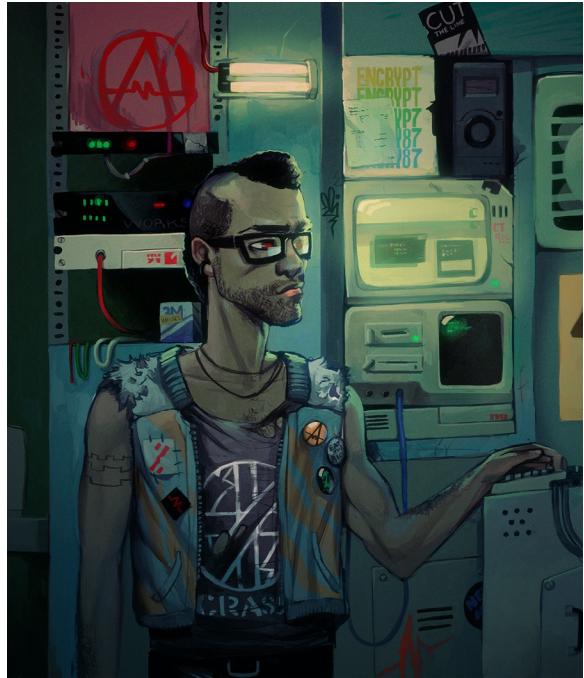
Why do we need hackers?

Neither skills nor technologies needed for resilient communities are taught at school. The official capitalist belief is TINA (There Is No Alternative) and the least needed thing is to teach people how to actually build alternative communities.

So, if we want to have our own system (community) up and running, we need to hack it together. Thus, we need hackers.

People in general aren't very technical. Being a „digital native" doesn't make one a good IT technician. Other technologies may be known by some, but the overal levell of technological education is random at best. Same applies to social skills. Here comes the idea of the „telegraph network".

We can imagine, that every community has a „go-to hacker", who stays in touch with the global hacking community and acts as an interface in solving more serious technical problems. (S)he would also coordinate „upstream contribution" from the settlers community.

From the other side, community will „support their local hacker", providing nice and friendly social environment, along with material help.

THE INSTOPPABLE MARCH INTO THE PRESENT

The goal I try to reach is not just „to connect the dots"; it is rather to instigate dots to connect among themselves. Over the world, hackers and farmers already join forces[7]. If we broaden this process to include other kinds of settlers and to add social toolset of anarchpositivism, the benefits will be huge and mutual. Let's try to summarise what can be pooled from various actors of this process.

COMMON-POOL RESOURCES

Settler communities, especially agricultural ones, can be a source of many interesting raw materials. Apart from the herbalists' domain, there is a number of plant-derived plastics, fuels, construction materials and other interesting stuff, industrial hemp being one of the most impressive examples.

They also provide challenges and traditional knowledge, hardly known outside their social circle. Last but not least, they are a friendly environment often sought by those who need a break, some rest or even healing.

Hackers are powerful actors in terms of technical and scientific knowledge. They are also highly syncretic, goal oriented and experiment-happy. They can provide vast knowledge in a condensed way. They are also networked – over internet – in a manner that gives quick access to every new idea or solution.

Many of them also work for academic and business institutions, which sometimes gives access to less-publicly-known assets.

Anarchists are mostly urban based – similarily to hackers – but they are also striving for independence and resilience, like the settlers. For the common benefit they can bring in active – sometimes aggressive – social support and solidarity, along with the longest tradition of political and social thought. Anarchist social concepts – in their various shapes, colours and flavours – are the toolbox most suitable for independent communities of any kind, at least as a starting point.

AND THE REWARD IS SWEET

Settlers - alternative communities - will benefit hugely from the technical knowledge, ethics and the way of thinking, hackers can

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7   http://guerrillatranslation.com/2014/04/23/when-hackers-and-farmers-join-forces/
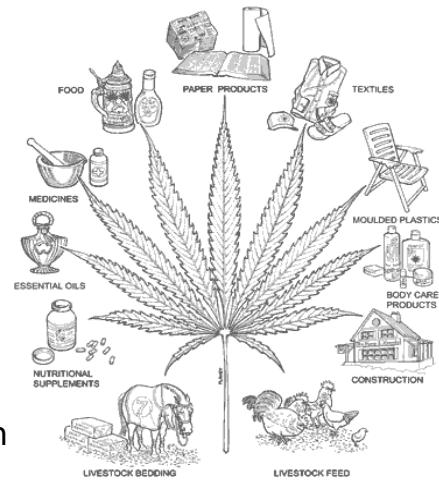
provide. They will also gain support, solidarity and – if needed - protection from the anarchist movement[8].

Hackers can have their social skills upgraded, along with new fields of exploration, new challenges and inspirations. New, hacker-friendly social and material base is also very important.

Anarchists will be able to start testing their constructive social ideas in the praxis of settling communities. They will also gain an influx of social and technical skills[9], much needed in any form of political activity.
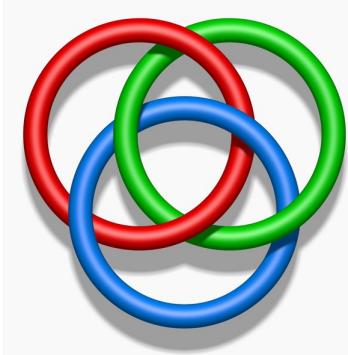
TOGETHER we will create a working social ecosystem, networked and interdependent enough to provide resilience and sustainability, while cultivating our diversity as well. Lessening our dependence from „the Matrix" and increasing the network interdependence will make us stronger and will bring more people in – people who are now too afraid to leave their cages.

SO, SHALL WE HACK IT TOGETHER?

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8   http://media.tumblr.com/2fae3a1c49f3f5bb41622bbccf7ea860/tumblr_inline_n5y5 zwLMT11s2yhww.jpg
9   http://vinay.howtolivewiki.com/blog/personal/talk-outline-for-jan-7th-in-london-infrastructure-for-anarchists-1144